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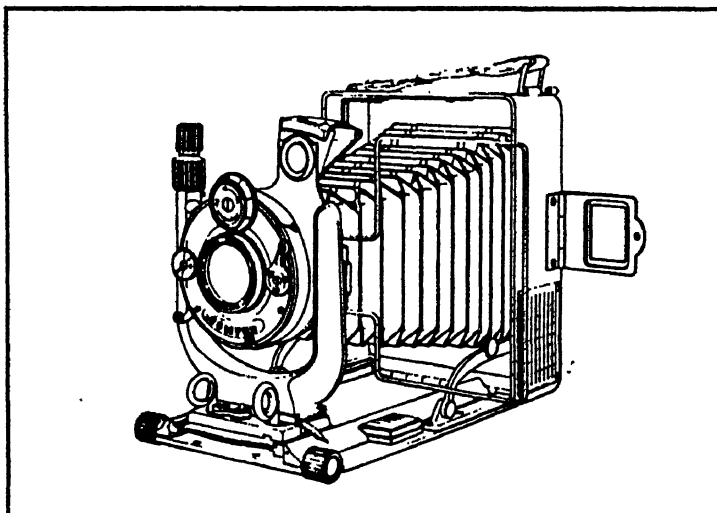






# PHOTOCRAFT MINI-GUIDE

*Written and edited by Mark Baczynsky*



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# **A WORD ABOUT THE PHOTOCRAFT MINI-GUIDES...**

**The basic aim of these publications is to present useful information in a DIRECT AND CONCISE MANNER. No attempt is made to go into the minute, time-consuming details. We simply try to show you the easiest way to start and/or accomplish a project.**

**Our "ORIGINAL IDEA" guides are more detailed simply because they describe how to construct new photographic equipment which is not available through the usual commercial outlets.**

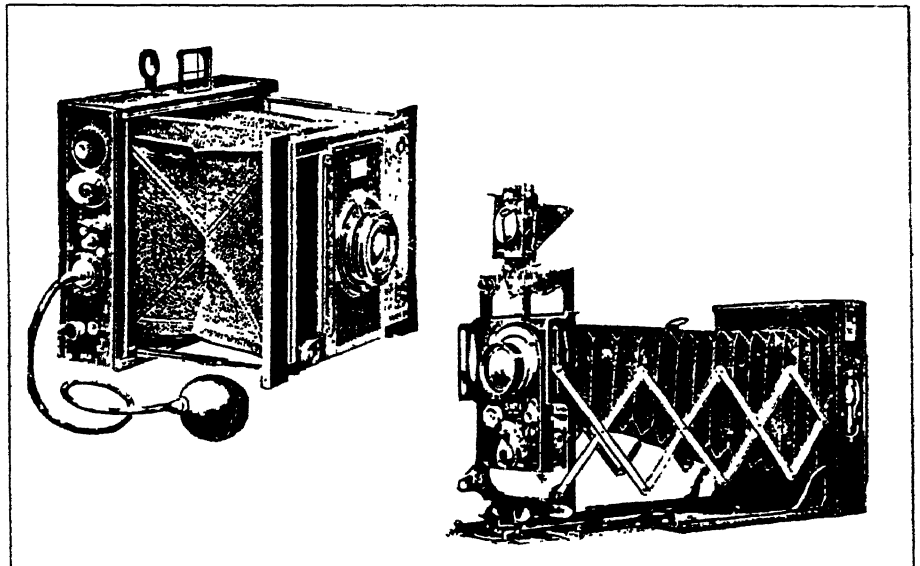
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# HOW TO RESTORE ANTIQUE AND CLASSIC CAMERAS

*This booklet represents the very personal and subjective view of my involvement with antique and classic cameras. Hopefully, its contents will be of help to the beginning and advanced collector, provide guidelines for meaningful and profitable expansion of this most interesting and unexpectedly fulfilling avocation - camera collecting.*



I first got hooked by a little, innocent-looking No. 3 Cycle Poco camera with its cherry wood interior, red bellows and brass Unicum shutter. Actually when I bought it at a local flea market, it was dusty, its bellows were quite dry and its brass somewhat dull from age. The leather covering was unattractive but basically intact.

When I brought this dusty find home, my kind wife exclaimed very pointedly: "You paid \$3.00 for that? What a waste of money!!!" Somewhat hastily, I retreated downstairs determined to prove that this old, tired "Poco" could be transformed back into its former glory.

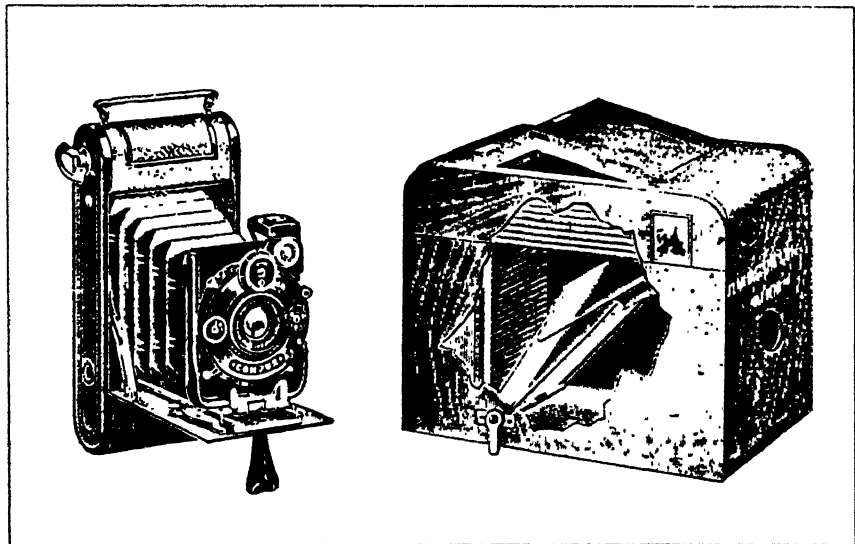


The procedure, which I will describe at length in the restoration chapter and which could be applied to many antique cameras, took about two hours.

When I finally displayed my restored prize upstairs, there were sounds of admiration (what pretty looking wood, etc.); however, the ultimate praise came when, some months later, I sold the camera for \$75.00 to a Poco collector -that rectified all doubts and established me as a financial genius.

Now I can buy and bring home anything photographic and the only remark is: "Where are we going to keep it all ???" Perhaps I'll switch to miniature cameras - but then I will miss all that rich wood, all those colorful bellows and the impressive looking brass. No, I guess we'll just have to buy a bigger house.

## COLLECTING / WHERE TO FIND THEM AND WHAT TO COLLECT



One of the most frequently asked questions from a beginning collector is: "Where do I find old cameras?" The answer is: "Everywhere!" The most important thing is to let your friends, relatives and business associates know that you collect.



You will be surprised how many people have old cameras gathering dust in attics, basements, etc. While many of these will not be very rare, they may still be considered "antique" by collectors.

Most people will sell them quite reasonably, sometimes give them away free. This is especially true when you deal with relatives. A small newspaper ad ("Looking for old, obsolete cameras - will pay top price") is also quite an effective way to get you started.

Of course, flea markets, garage sales and auctions are most fun - I guess we all still have that hunting spirit in us and exploring outdoor flea markets, during good weather, can really be invigorating, even though it might require some driving to get to one.

Another question that is asked quite often is: "What shall I collect - wooden cameras, box cameras, bellows types, Leicas, twin lens reflexes, stereo or what???" My advice is: In the beginning, *collect everything* - don't forget that later, when you decide to specialize, you can always trade with other collectors and obtain items you want without a major outlay of money.

Personally, I consider myself more a restorer than a collector although I do have a modest collection, but since I am also actively involved in photography, my trade activity has enabled me to obtain cameras with little or no money.

Here, I must tell you the story of Nikon F camera with 2.0/50mm Nikkor lens which cost me all of \$7.50. That's right - \$7.50!

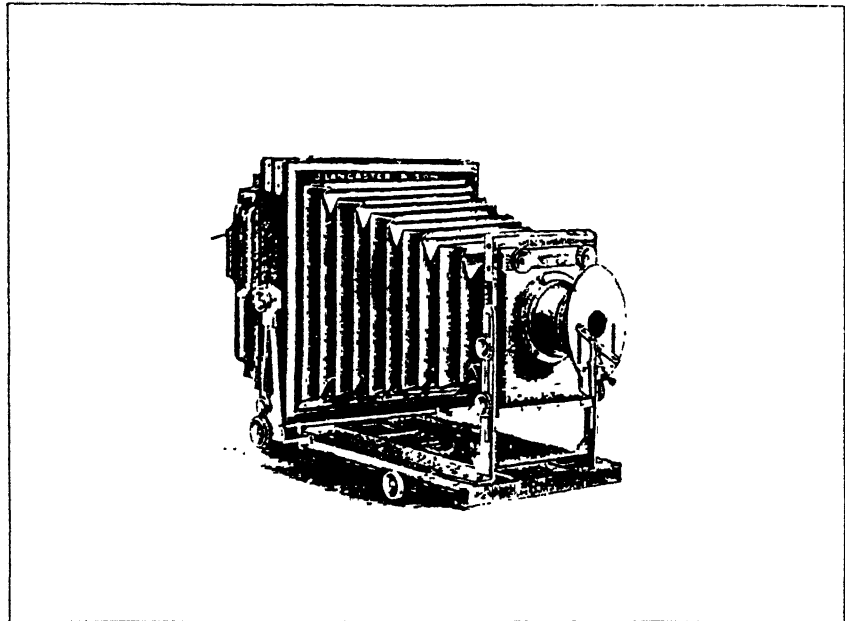
Last spring I happened to drive by an outdoor flea market and naturally, I stopped to look things over. Among the usual brick-a-brack, there, lying on the grass, was a non-descript looking enlarger. After examining it, I discovered that it had a good quality Schneider lens and that aside from accumulated dust and dirt, it was quite functional.

The asking price was \$10.00 but after pointing out its age and condition, it dropped to \$6.50. Shortly afterwards, I placed a small trade ad in Shutterbug Ads (Box 730, Titusville, Fla. 32780),





which cost \$1.00. After the issue containing my ad was out, I received a phone call from a friendly man with a southern accent who wondered if I would be willing to trade this enlarger for a 250mm f/4 Nikkor telephoto which was just gathering dust on his shelf. I agreed, and we made the exchange. Then, a while later, I met a commercial photographer who liked Nikon F body with lens in trade. Granted, the body was used but fully functional, the lens was almost mint - so - there is the story of the \$7.50 Nikon. If I went to an average photo store, the cost would have been close to \$300.00, perhaps higher.



Now, let's continue with other camera sources. I regularly visit antique stores in my community. Most of the time there is very little photographic material, but occasionally it is possible to come across scarce items.

Also, when the store owners know that you are interested in antique photographica, they often will bring cameras in but usually at somewhat higher prices - still, you can usually bargain quite successfully. It is also a good idea to ask for cameras because, in some stores, they might be kept in the back.

Occasional visits to the regular photo stores may also result in discoveries of antique cameras since some people bring them in as trade-ins. I usually leave my phone number and ask to be called when something interesting turns up.



There are periodicals which specialize in selling used and antique equipment. One which helped me greatly to get started in this exciting collecting-restoring business was *Shutterbug Ads*. I would strongly advise any beginning collector to get a sample copy or a subscription since it will serve as a basic tool for reaching other people who share similar interests.

There are those who regularly advertise in *Shutterbug Ads* stating their needs and get very good results. A study of current prices asked will also give you an idea what to ask for your equipment should you decide to sell (though such prices are not always realistic).

In larger cities, such as New York, there are photographic historical societies whose members hold annual or bi-annual trade shows. There you can also find many interesting items or, for a small fee, get a table and actually sell (or trade) your equipment.

You will meet intelligent, bright people who are friendly and eager to help a neophyte. It is always thrilling to meet in person people you read about or corresponded with. Somehow, this particular hobby seems to bring out the best in everyone - don't ask me why - but in all my years as collector and restorer, I still have to encounter a dishonest character. For example, *Shutterbug Ads* subscribers are absolutely fantastic as far as honesty is concerned. Aside from one insufficient fund check return (later rectified), I experienced nothing but fair, honest deals.

To recap again: what you collect will be your very personal decision. While some collectors are wild about wooden cameras with fancy bellows and impressive brass barrel lenses, some specialize in just one camera line (such as Premo), others indulge in the highly expensive Leica collecting, pre-1900 cameras and so on and on. Many collect anything photographic - that still seems to be the best direction for a beginner.

*Now a few hints before you buy:* Examine the camera and lens carefully. Should the metal body appear badly rusted, bellows frail and full of holes, obviously it is better to bypass such a camera unless it's a great rarity. The lens should be clear and the shutter functioning - if the shutter does not work, point this out to the seller and ask for a much lower price. Learn to distinguish



between a dusty, dirty camera as opposed to a rusty, pitted one with mildew or fungus on the lens. The former can be restored quite easily, while the latter is rather difficult to put into good shape. As you acquire more and more cameras, you may want to buy these "junkers" just for replacement parts value.

Bellows should also be very carefully examined for pin holes and brittle condition since replacing them could be quite expensive. When buying wooden cameras (such as view or early box), check them for missing or badly damaged sections. Keep in mind that wooden parts may be more easily duplicated than those made of metal. Many older wood constructed cameras were covered with leather or leather like material. Most of the time it is difficult to obtain a matching replacement, so make sure that the covering is basically intact.

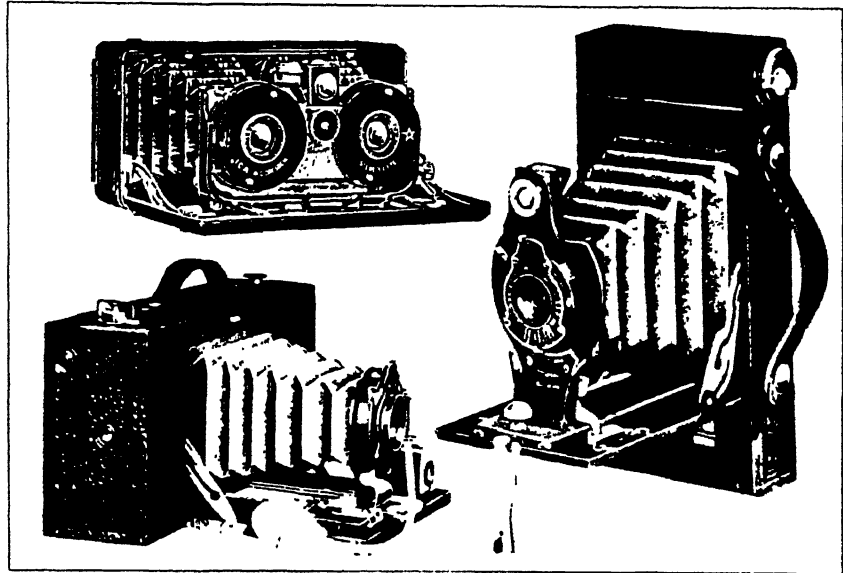
In extreme cases, the entire camera may have to be re-covered and for this purpose, National Camera Inc. (2000 West Union Ave., Englewood, Colo. 80110) offers a material that will do a very satisfactory job, although I would not advise a beginner to try his hand at recovering unless he practices on discarded camera bodies and gains the necessary experience.

If you happen to find a camera which you know is rare (such as an early string set Kodak) and the price is reasonable, get it even if there is some minor damage or a part is missing. What I am trying to point out is that most of the time you will encounter cameras which are not really that scarce and the better physical shape they are in, the easier the restoration and higher their overall value. Very quickly you will develop a "nose" for rare items, learn how to spot them and, with luck, acquire them reasonably. Here is a practical hint along these lines: Should you find something that is quite rare, try to keep excitement out of your voice because the price tends to rise when the seller senses your elevated interest.

This applies especially to flea markets - perhaps you should just say that you might make a planter out of that wooden box; this usually puts a damper on high prices. Just like in any other business, scarcity and demand create higher prices. Here you are in the position to "control" the demand aspect of the market.



When examining more contemporary cameras, such as twin lens reflexes, 120 folders and 35mm cameras, primary attention should be directed toward lens and shutter condition along with correctly working film transport and overall good physical condition. Anything that indicates that the camera has been dropped (dents, loose parts) or water damaged (rusty metal, non functioning shutter), should cause you to reject it unless you could use it for parts.



An interesting area of collecting is subminiatures such as Minox, Ticka, Kombi and similar very small cameras. One advantage about these is that they occupy very little space and also it might be somewhat easier to build a representative collection (not taking into consideration great rarities), simply because there were not that many varieties made in contrast to the vast selection of the more conventional cameras.

So, when you start, collect any camera that strikes your fancy and when you decide to specialize, be guided by your taste and your pocketbook.





## RESTORATION / HOW TO DO IT AND WHAT MATERIALS TO USE

One of the most rewarding aspects of antique camera collecting is the process of bringing that old, tired looking masterpiece back to its former glory. In this chapter I will describe specific procedures and materials used to achieve this.

Let me stress the importance of expressing care when handling cameras which are old and possibly quite brittle. Force should be avoided at all costs. For example, if a folding camera refuses to open, first examine it with a magnifying glass and try to determine what exactly causes the problem - rust, damage to the latch or other structural defects. At times the spring that pushes the door open loses elasticity with age and it is necessary to pry the camera open with the tip of a small screwdriver.

The first step is to carefully clean the camera of dust, dirt and any foreign matter. Deep seated internal dust will require use of Q-tips or DUST-OFF compressed air which may be bought in any camera store.

Should the camera have bellows which are in good condition, wipe every crease clean and apply (with Q-tips) "LEXOL" to restore their flexibility. In the event bellows are red and faded (or any other color that has faded), the color can be restored by using "ESQUIRE INSTANT SHOE COLORS", following the instructions on the container. It might be necessary to do some mixing to obtain exact match (such as adding a bit of black to get a darker red hue).

Practice first on a part of old bellows material and make sure the color is completely dry before making the comparison. Of course, a great majority of folding or view cameras has black bellows, so the problem of matching does not exist and just a coat of "ESQUIRE" black will do. To keep bellows really flexible, treat them with neatsfoot oil.

Now, the problem of defective or light leaking bellows. Should the bellows really be in bad shape, torn, falling apart, sections missing or extremely brittle, they would have to be replaced. Here are a few companies that perform this service:



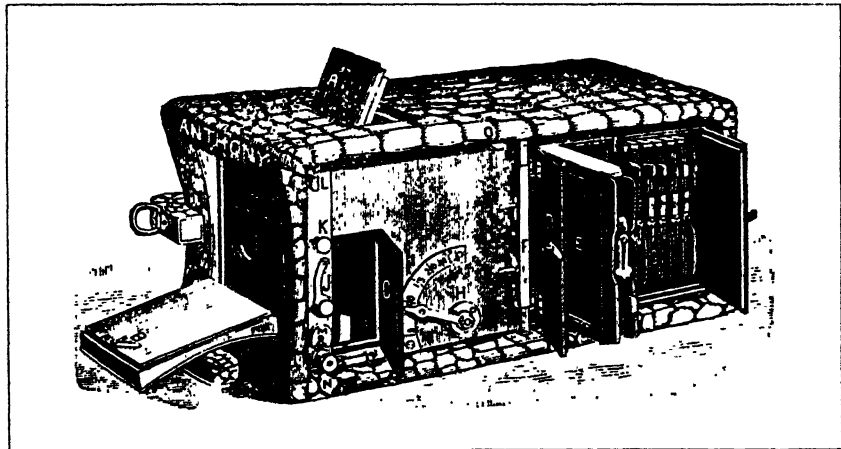
TURNER BELLOWS INC. 1099 Jay Street, Rochester, New York 14611

NEW YORK BELLOWS CO., 3050 Lawson Blvd., Oceanside, New York 11572

WESTERN BELLOWS CO., 404 Agostino Rd., San Gabriel, Ca. 91776.

Depending on size, the replacement may cost anywhere from \$50.00 to \$250.00 or more. Realizing this, I always try, if possible, to repair bellows simply as an economic, money saving measure. From National Camera, Inc., you can obtain bellows repair material (inside and outside). Badly torn areas can be fixed by cementing sections of repair material with contact cement. If possible, do the repair from inside. Pin holes are a pesky problem. At times they can be eliminated by careful application of BLACK PLASTIC RUBBER (made by DURO) to each offending spot. All this can be quite time consuming, so decide in advance whether the camera is going to be actually used before devoting much energy to bellows repair. If the camera is going to be for display only (as many antique cameras are), just cosmetic repair should suffice.

Body restoration is next and can be divided into two categories: wood body repair and metal body repair.



Many wooden camera interiors are actually quite well preserved and all that is needed is some cleaning and application of standard furniture polish (such as PLEDGE) to bring them back to life. Minor scratches can be removed with "OLD ENGLISH" scratch remover.

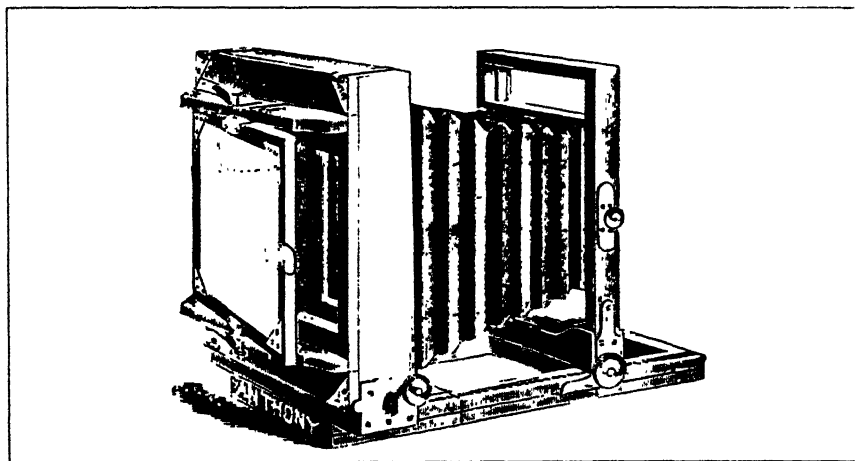


Wooden exteriors are much more subject to damage and consequently more effort is needed to restore them. Examine for any cracks and other structural defects. Sections might be dried up and therefore open. Some judicious glueing will be required in such cases. Use white glue, such as ELMERS, and clamp securely for proper setting.

Missing segments may be duplicated from similarly grained wood pieces while deep gouges can be filled with plastic wood, sanded and stained to match the rest of the camera body. At times, a very slight sanding of the entire body might be necessary to even up the surfaces (use extra fine grade sand paper).

One product that has served me admirably is MINWAX ANTI-QUE OIL FINISH. After taking care of the surfaces, an application of Minwax protects the wood and brings out the grain texture. It is important to use only one or two coats and wipe well before letting it dry, otherwise the finish will become too refined and artificial looking.

For the sake of accuracy, let me point out that there are those collectors who prefer their cameras to look as they found them (except for cleaning and possibly bellows treatment). If you feel this way, many of the hints in this booklet will, of course, not apply.



Metal bodies present different and at times more complex problems. Same cleaning procedures apply here also. Should sections be rusty or have peeling paint or enamel, it will be necessary to sand them with extra fine sandpaper followed by a good cleaning with denaturalized alcohol.

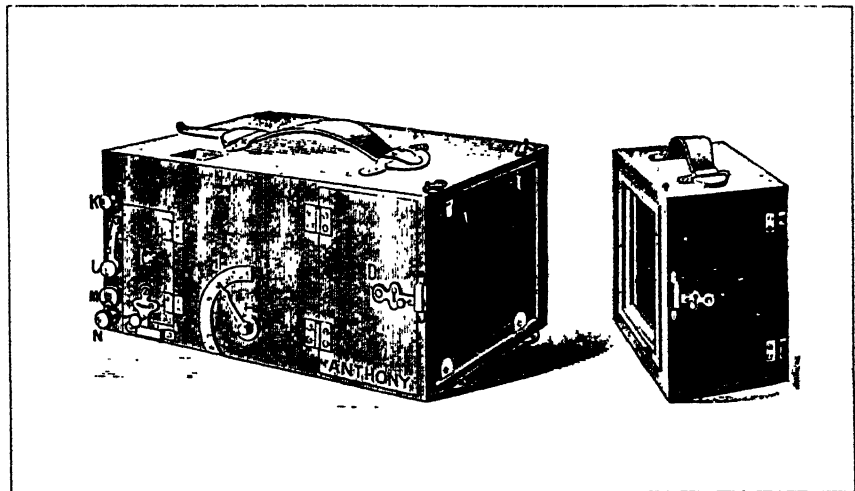


For repainting, I found that KODAK BRUSHING LACQUER No.4 (recently discontinued, but still available in many photo stores) produces superior results when used in combination with OZ CREAM POLISH.

First, using a small camel hair brush, apply Kodak No.4 to the area - brush in one direction only - let dry. With a Q-tip, apply a very thin coat of OZ polish. Buff with soft cloth. This produces a very close duplication of satin black finish that so many metal cameras have. *Please be aware that this is not as wear resistant as the factory baked on finish and will not withstand heavy use.*

One major advantage of this system is that the results can be seen immediately (Kodak No.4 dries very rapidly) and if not satisfactory, the lacquer can be easily removed and the area repainted again. Minor scratches and blemishes also respond well to this combination. Should you need a more glossy finish, substitute a thin coat of MINIWAX for the OZ POLISH, but this time DON'T BUFF.

This type of finish is often found on certain old lens barrels and internal areas of camera bodies. I believe that these particular combinations are original with me and although they might appear outlandish, they do work.



Many older cameras have a great amount of plated chrome or brass in them (such as hinges, rails, corner braces, knobs and so on.) Usually, I take each part off, noting the relative position on a rough camera sketch, and individually hand polish them using chrome polish for plated parts and crocus cloth for brass.





This is a rather time consuming procedure but well worth the final result. Please note that in some cameras, certain chrome plated parts can not be removed and have to be polished while on the camera.

Before re-attaching the parts, I give them a thin coat of "KRYLON CRYSTAL CLEAR SPRAY" to preserve the finish.

Should some metal parts be damaged or missing, it is often possible to have them duplicated. Here is one company that does this work: METRIX ASSOCIATES, 13 Overbrook Terrace, Natick, Mass. 01760. Make sure you give exact description with measurements or, better yet, if possible send damaged part in. Since this is a highly specialized type of work, it is not cheap - perhaps an estimate should be requested first.

Cameras with scuffed or faded leather coverings are restored by application of black "ESQUIRE" shoe color. Here again, follow directions on the container.

While this product is somewhat expensive, the finish it produces is excellent and without that glossy, artificial look many other dyes have.

Now we come to a touchy section: lenses and shutters. My advice is twofold:

1. Clean the external lens elements with a lens cleaner (such as Kodak).
2. In the beginning, leave the actual repair of shutters to qualified repairmen especially if the shutters are of the more contemporary variety (Compound, Compur, 35mm focal plane or electronic).

With older shutters, if you are really adventuresome, get ED ROMNEY'S text on antique shutter repair (Box 425, Drayton, SC 29333). It is easy to follow and will often be of great help. Romney also has texts on more contemporary shutter and camera repair procedures, including classic Leica.

While these are the major basic restorative procedures, naturally, there are many variations to the above approaches - actually, each camera you set out to restore will present a set of its very



own specific problems. Your imagination and resourcefulness will play a major role in helping you obtain the desired result. I find that each restoration project teaches me something new which in turn can be utilized in future restorations.

So, if you follow these suggestions, your antique and classic cameras should look rejuvenated and increase considerably in value - also they are more likely to survive another 100 years successfully!

## RESTORATION MATERIALS AND THEIR SOURCES

Kodak No.4 Brushing Lacquer .....	Photo Stores
Q-tips.....	Drug Stores
Kodak Lens Cleaner.....	Photo Stores
Esquire Shoe Cleaner.....	Shoe Stores
OZ Cream Polish.....	Dept. Stores
Denat. Alcohol.....	Hardware Stores
Sandpaper.....	Hardware Stores
Crocus Cloth.....	Hardware Stores
Camel Hair Brushes.....	Art Stores
Clamps.....	Hardware Stores
Bellow Repair Material...	National Camera Inc.
Leatherette Material.....	Same
Spanner Wrench.....	Same
Minwax Antique Oil Finish.....	Paint Stores
Lexol.....	Shoe Stores
Black Plastic Rubber by Duro.....	Hardware Stores
Old English Scratch Remover.....	Paint Stores
- Dust-Off.....	Photo Stores
White Glue.....	Hardware Stores
Neatsfoot Oil.....	Shoe Stores
Contact Cement.....	Art Stores
Cleaning Fluid.....	Hardware Stores
Lintless Cloth.....	Hardware Stores
Furniture Polish.....	Paint Stores
Carbona Cleaning Fluid.....	Hardware Stores







